

The Heart System #Chapter 171 - Read The Heart System Chapter 171

Chapter 171: Chapter 171

I rubbed the back of my head, the café suddenly feeling ten degrees warmer. The laughter from a second ago evaporated. Jasmine toyed with her straw. Kim stared into her latte like it held the secrets of the universe. Tessa drummed her nails on the table, slow and deliberate. Nala tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. Even Minne, half-hidden under her hood, went perfectly still.

Delilah's gaze drifted from face to face, lingering on the way Minne's fingers curled protectively around her hot-chocolate mug, on the matching keychains dangling from Jasmine's and Tessa's belts, on the identical faint hickeys peeking above Kim's collar. A small, knowing smile tugged at the corner of her mouth.

Silence stretched, thick as the rain hammering the windows.

I clapped once, loud enough to make Minne jump. "Well. Since we're all here and the quiz is dead, let's do something fun."

Kim blinked. "Like what?"

I jerked my chin toward the far corner where four college kids in Hogwarts robes were hunched over a battered card table, sleeves rolled, cards flying. "That. Looks like Exploding Snap meets Uno on steroids. I wanna try."

Jasmine was already sliding out of the booth. "Might actually salvage this day."

Hours slipped by in a blur of shouts, stolen fries, and rain that refused to quit. The café lights flicked to warmer tones. Someone swapped the playlist to lo-fi beats. The clock above the counter blinked 1:00 p.m. before anyone noticed.

"Break?" Jasmine finally suggested, stretching until her crop top rode high.

We scattered. I stepped outside under the awning for a cigarette, the cold biting my knuckles. Inside, Nala had commandeered a corner booth and was teaching Kim, Jasmine, and Tessa some CEO-level phone app that made them gasp every time a stock ticker flashed green. Minne hovered nearby, refilling cocoa like a silent ninja.

The bell jingled. Delilah stepped out, camel coat slung over one arm.

"Mind if I steal a drag?" she asked, voice low.

I offered the cigarette. She took it between two fingers, inhaled, exhaled slow. Smoke curled between us like a question.

"You're not subtle, Evan," she said finally.

I leaned against the brick wall. "Never claimed to be."

She passed the cigarette back. "Five women. One penthouse. A damn maid who calls you Master." A soft laugh. "Most guys can't keep a cactus alive."

"Different kind of green thumb."

Delilah studied me, rain drumming on the awning above us. "And they're all... okay with it?"

"More than okay," I said. "They chose it. Same way I chose them."

She nodded once, slow. "And where exactly do I fit in that picture?"

The quest pinged again in the corner of my vision, letters glowing.

"W-what do you mean?" I asked.

"Why did you call me here?" Delilah asked. "To introduce me to your friends? And fuck, what kind of 'friends' are they, Evan. Huh?"

"I..."

"Do you have sex with them?" she asked. "What is this, some sort of cult or something?"

"Delilah..."

"Tell me the truth," she said. "I deserve it."

Tell her the truth? Would this even work? Maybe she'd be okay with it? After all, she had shown me her side that she tried to hide her whole life. Vulnerable. In need of help. And I was there for her. Maybe... by some miracle... she'd be okay with it?

"Yes. I do. Not with Minne. But yes. Jasmine. Kim. Nala. Tessa."

She froze, then dropped the cigarette on the ground and turned away. She stayed there for a second, hiding her face from me. I was anxious as hell, but still hopeful. I knew she was weighing her next move.

EVENT

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Delilah's Interest -100

She spun back and slapped me across the cheek. My head snapped sideways, eyes wide. Tears already streaked her face.

"I'm pregnant," she said. "And you're trying to add me to your little cult harem thing?"

Everything stopped. "W-what... pregnant?"

"Fuck you, Evan," she spat, shaking her head. "You're like every man I know. Only thinking with his dick."

"Wait—"

She stormed off, hair bouncing with every furious step. I stood frozen. I got her pregnant. What the hell had I become? She was right. This fucking system had corrupted me. All I'd cared about at this convention was the quest, the points, the next girl. I hadn't even tried to enjoy the day with the others.

"Holy... fuck. Oh god. Oh, fuck. Oh no. No, no, no. No."

♥□♥□♥□

I knocked on the door and waited. The echo of my knuckles against the wood sounded too light for the weight sitting in my chest.

Nothing.

The hallway smelled faintly of rain and dust. Somewhere below, a car passed, splashing through a puddle. I could hear it but couldn't move. My hand rested on the door, fingers trembling just slightly.

"Delilah," I said, voice hoarse. "Please. Just open up. I need to talk to you."

No answer.

I leaned forward until my forehead pressed against the door. The cold seeped into my skin. "Delilah, I know you're there."

Inside, a faint rustle, a shift of weight. Then silence again.

I closed my eyes and spoke quieter. "Please. You don't have to say anything. Just listen."

From inside came a muffled voice. "Go away, Evan."

"I can't."

"You should," she said. "You've done enough."

I bit the inside of my cheek until I tasted metal. "You're right. I've done more than enough. But if I walk away now, I'll never get the chance to tell you what you deserve to hear."

Something scraped against the door. Maybe she had slid down to sit against it. I could picture her on the other side, arms around her knees, hair falling into her face. The thought made my stomach twist.

"I'm not here to ask for forgiveness," I said. "You'd be right not to give it. I just... I need to tell you the truth."

Her voice came softer but sharp as glass. "The truth? Now you care about that?"

"Yes," I said. "Because if I don't say it now, I'll never say it."

She laughed quietly, bitter and tired. "Say it then. I'm listening."

I took a breath that hurt to hold. "I ruined everything good that ever happened to me. I wanted too much. I thought I could help everyone, be there for everyone, and somehow that would make it right. But it wasn't right. I was selfish, and I used people who trusted me. I used you most of all."

The sound that left her was small but sharp, like a breath caught on pain.

"You got me pregnant," she said quietly. "You made me believe I was different. That what we had meant something. And then you went and slept with the others like it was nothing."

The words hit harder than I was ready for. I closed my eyes, breathing through it. "I know."

"You don't get to say that," she said. "You don't get to sound calm. You don't get to sound sorry like it's some noble thing."

"I'm not calm," I said. "I'm terrified. I don't even know how to start fixing what I broke."

"You can't fix it."

"Maybe not," I said. "But I can tell you what's real."

"I'm carrying your child, Evan," she said, her voice cracking. "Do you even realize that? I'm the one who has to live with it every day. I can't just walk away from it like you walked away from us."

"I haven't walked away," I said quickly. "Not from you. Not from the baby."

"Then from who?" she snapped.

My throat closed for a second. "From the man I thought I was."

For a moment, there was only the sound of rain outside. Then, softly, she said, "You slept with them. All of them."

"Yes." The word barely made it out. "I did."

"You didn't even try to lie."

"What good would that do?" I said. "You'd know anyway. You always saw through me."

Her breathing trembled. "You don't get points for honesty now."

"I know. But I'm done pretending. I cared about them, each of them, in ways I didn't understand. They looked at me like I could save them, and I wanted to believe it. I wanted to be that person. I wanted to feel like I mattered."

"And me?"

I swallowed hard. "You were the one who made me want to be better. When I'm helping someone—that lady who dropped her grocery bags yesterday, I remember your face. You, making me soup when I was sick. You, cleaning my place when I was a wreck. You... It's... always you. And I try to pay for this... I don't know what to call it—maybe, uh, debt to the world by helping others. If it was the old Evan before meeting you, I don't know where I'd be. I'd be a jackass. Selfish bastard."

"And?"

"And... despite thinking like that... I still ruined it."

She gave a quiet, broken laugh. "You did."

The silence stretched again. I could hear her moving on the other side, maybe brushing tears off her cheeks. The sound tore at me.

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"Delilah," I said. "I can't change what I did. But I want to take care of you. Of the baby. I won't disappear. I won't run."

"You think you can just say that and it'll fix anything?"

"No," I said. "But I mean it. I want to be here. Whatever it costs."

"You sound like you think you can have everything," she said. "You want me and them. You want to keep all of it."

I didn't answer right away. "It's not about wanting everything," I said quietly. "It's about not betraying the people who trust me."

Her tone hardened. "And what about betraying me?"

"I already did that," I said. "And I'll regret it every day. But if I abandon them now, I'd be betraying them. I'd be betraying everything I stood for. Everything I said I'd protect."

"You call that loyalty?" she asked, disbelief heavy in her voice. "Sleeping with them? Lying to me?"

"It's not loyalty to what I've done," I said. "It's loyalty to who I'm trying to become. They depended on me. I can't just throw them aside."

She exhaled, the sound sharp and weary. "You want to keep your little 'harem' and have a family too? You think that's something you can balance?"

"I don't know," I said honestly. "But I can try. I can be here for you and the baby, and still be there for them. I can't undo what I've built, but I can make it right."

Her laugh was thin and shaky. "Make it right. God, you really believe that, don't you?"

"I have to," I said. "If I don't believe I can make it right, then I've already failed."

The sound of her breathing was the only thing keeping me anchored.

"I hate that I still care," she whispered finally. "After everything you've done, after everything I know, I still care. And I hate that more than anything."

"I know," I said. "You have every right to."

"You ruined me, Evan. You ruined what we had."

"I did," I said. "But I'm still here. And I'll keep being here. You can scream at me, hate me, throw me out a hundred times, but I'll still show up. Because you and that child deserve that much."

She was quiet for a long time. Then, almost too softly to hear, she said, "I don't want to see you tonight."

"I understand."

"Come back tomorrow," she said after a moment. "Maybe I'll talk to you then."

"Alright."

I pressed my palm against the door.

"Thank you."

She didn't answer, but I heard the faintest sound, a small, uneven breath. Then a whisper that almost got lost in the rain.

"I don't forgive you."

"I know," I said quietly. "But maybe one day."

Her reply came slower this time, tired but gentler. "Go, Evan."

I wasn't talking out of my ass, these were my real thoughts. Leaving Delilah and going back to Jasmine and the others... that would... that would mean I'd be betraying her.

And, leaving Jasmine and the others for Delilah... that would mean I'd be betraying myself. Like I'd been luring these girls into darkness with a lantern full of false hopes, then leaving them just like that. Taking the light with me.

"Hmm."

I stood there a while longer, listening to the sound of her breathing on the other side. Then I turned and walked down the hall, my reflection trailing me in the dark glass of the window.

It wasn't forgiveness. Not yet. But it was something.

A start.

QUEST FAILED

Title: Another one

Task: Persuade Delilah to join
in your harem

Reward: +1 LVL, 250c, 200 EXP

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Result: You ruined it all.

♥□♥□♥□

My first day at TechForge... and it was boring as hell. I sat behind a sleek reception desk in the executive wing's antechamber, greeting visitors as they filed into Nala's office. My job? Booking her appointments, checking her calendar, making sure no one double-booked the CEO. It beat pumping gas in the summer heat, at least. The air-conditioning hummed softly, and the view through the floor-to-ceiling windows showed the city skyline glittering thirty stories below. Polished marble floors, abstract art on the walls, and the faint scent of expensive coffee from the break room down the hall—everything screamed money.

Two men stepped out of the elevator and strode toward my desk. Marcus Hale and Victor Hale. Brothers, supposedly, but they looked nothing alike.

"Hey," Marcus flashed a practiced smile. "Nala in?"

"Yep," I answered, forcing my own grin. "Go right ahead."

"Thanks," Victor said. "Congrats on the gig, by the way."

"Yeah, thanks. Hope things keep climbing for the company."

"She's got big shoes to fill after Guy," Marcus added, eyes glinting.

Marcus—the one gunning for the CEO chair himself. I wasn't about to bite. Day one, no reason to get canned. I just leaned back and shrugged.

"I trust her."

"For real, brother," Victor laughed. "You stepped up knowing Nala was next in line?"

"I tried," Marcus shot back. "Unlike you, I didn't tuck tail and wait for handouts."

"Shut up," Victor rolled his eyes. "We'll give you a headache with this, Evan. Let's see Nala."

"Go for it. Tell her I said hi."

"Will do, coffee-shop guy," Victor grinned.

"She really told... everyone?" I muttered. "How does the whole building know where we met?"

"Gossip's the top sport here, Evan Henrik Marlowe," Victor said, locking eyes. "That's how you survive."

"How do you know my middle name?"

"I vet everyone." He tapped his temple. "Everyone."

"Paranoid?"

"Prepared."

"Respect."

"See you, Evan." He clapped Marcus on the shoulder. "Let's roll."

They knocked on Nala's frosted-glass door and slipped inside. I leaned forward, catching a glimpse of frantic gestures and urgent voices—like the company's fate hung on every word. I exhaled, spun my chair back to the desk, and checked the clock. Eight more hours. This job was a godsend, honestly. But the people? Elite didn't mean better. Just richer assholes with background checks.

I'd take dumb gas-station jerks over these any day.

"Ugh..."

I grabbed my phone and unlocked it, thumb hovering over Delilah's name. One ring. Two. Three. Four. Nothing.

I stared at the screen, the call dying in my hand. "Come on," I muttered. "Pick up."

She didn't.

I tossed the phone onto the table, leaned back in the chair, and stared at the ceiling. My heartbeat was loud in my ears. Of course she wouldn't answer. What was I expecting? She had every reason to block me forever.

But she was pregnant. With my kid.

The thought didn't fit inside my head. It sat heavy, like a brick dropped on my chest. My best friend's mother. In Ivy's bed. The kind of mistake that eats you alive in slow motion.

I rubbed my face with both hands until I saw spots. There was no way to rewind it. No way to fix it. I'd been reckless, desperate for comfort, drowning in something that didn't even feel like me anymore.

A few minutes later, both Hale walked out of one of the rooms. Both gave me a short nod before leaving for the elevator. I nodded back automatically, eyes still on my phone. The door closed behind them.

Silence. Only the hum of the city through the glass.

I called Delilah again. No answer. Straight to voicemail. I didn't even wait for the tone before ending it.

"Evan?" Nala's voice drifted from the hallway. "Could you come here for a second, please?"

I sighed and stood up. "Yeah, one sec."

She met me at the door of her office, holding it open with one hand. When I stepped inside, I had to pause for a moment.

The place didn't look like an office so much as a designer showroom. The floor was polished dark wood, shining enough to catch the reflection of the city lights bleeding through the glass walls. A wide desk sat near the center, papers stacked neatly on one side, two monitors glowing a soft blue on the other. Behind her, the skyline stretched across the floor-to-ceiling window, blurred by rain and streaked with the neon glow from the streets below.

There was a faint smell of coffee and perfume in the air, something floral mixed with the scent of paper and ozone from the rain. A few framed photos lined the shelf, her and the team at some event, a group shot at the convention, one of her standing in front of a TechForge banner, smiling like she actually believed in the company back then.

Even the furniture looked like it cost more than my old apartment, minimal, clean, expensive. The kind of place meant to impress anyone who walked in. I felt like I should've been wearing a suit just to stand there.

For a second I just stood there, not knowing where to put my hands. I didn't belong in rooms like this.

Nala sat at the edge of a small table near the window, her posture straight but calm. "You seem to be out of it," she said. "Everything okay?"

"Yeah, just... you know, first day at work." I forced a smile. "A little anxious."

"I've seen you checking your phone every two minutes." She tilted her head. "You waiting for something?"

"Nah," I said, waving it off. "Just checking the news, you know?"

Her mouth quirked. "The girls told me you say 'you know' a lot when you lie."

That made me pause. "They did?"

She nodded once. "Are you lying, Evan?"

Well... shit.

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I shook my head too fast and sank onto the couch. The cushions swallowed me, smooth leather that smelled faintly of cedar. She walked over and sat beside me, turning so she could face me fully. Her eyes were sharp but not unkind.

How could I even start? Tell her I'd gotten Delilah pregnant? Tell her I'd been losing myself to something invisible, something that made me think about control more than connection? The words jammed in my throat.

I linked my hands together, elbows on my knees. The room felt too large, too perfect. I didn't fit into this place, not with my secondhand sneakers and my past that smelled like cheap cigarettes.

"I think I'm just a little lost," I said finally. "Everything changed so fast. One day I was sleeping in a rundown apartment, now I'm here."

"That's okay," she said quietly. "We can help you adjust."

"I don't need help," I said, shaking my head. "If anything, I should be the one helping."

Her eyebrows drew together. "And why do you think that?"

"I don't know," I said, searching for the right words. "I've had people pulling me out of the mud my whole life. Everyone helping me, saving me, forgiving me. I can't stand it anymore. I want to be the one fixing things for once."

She frowned. "Fixing what?"

"Everything," I said before I could stop myself. "With this system, I should be helping people. Not the other way around."

"System?" she asked.

I hesitated. "Just... a way I organize myself. Trying to get my life together."

"That still doesn't explain why you won't accept help."

"Because," I said, standing suddenly, "I feel small."

Her tone sharpened. "You see me as small, Evan? Without your help, I'd still be under my brother's control. You think I'm weak?"

"No, that's not what I meant."

"Then what?"

I took a step toward the window, my reflection ghosting over the skyline. "I meant that when people help me, I start feeling like I'm not in control of my own life. Like I'm just a passenger. I hate that feeling."

She came closer, voice softening. "Then stop fighting everyone who reaches out. You don't have to prove anything. Not to me, not to anyone."

"I just..." I stopped, searching for the words. "I can't explain it. Not right now."

She placed a hand on my shoulder. Her touch was light, grounding. "Then try. Whatever is eating you up, say it. You don't need to be strong right now. Feel small for once. Be the damsel in distress."

I looked at her hand for a long moment before answering. "Let's talk about it with the others too. I owe all of you an explanation."

Her expression eased. "Alright. If that's what you want."

Right on cue, the elevator chimed from the other side of the room. I glanced over just in time to see Jasmine, Kim, and Tessa step out, shaking off umbrellas and laughing about something. Tessa carried a pink pastry box like it was treasure.

I rubbed a hand over my face. I'd forgotten they said they'd stop by.

Nala waved. "Over here."

The girls greeted her, then me, filling the room with chatter and perfume and the smell of rain-damp hair. Jasmine raised the box. "We brought donuts."

"Perfect," Nala said. "Because Evan has something to say."

I blinked. "Wait, what?"

She crossed her arms. "You wanted to talk to all of us, remember? No time like now."

The laughter died out. The girls exchanged quick glances, then took seats around the room. Kim sat cross-legged on the couch across from me, Jasmine leaned against the table, and Tessa dropped into a chair, spinning the donut box on her palm.

I cleared my throat. "Alright... I guess."

Their smiles faded, replaced by quiet curiosity.

"For the last few days," I said slowly, "I've realized I've changed. And not in a way I'm proud of."

Kim frowned. "Changed how?"

"I've been... arrogant," I admitted. "Ever since things started going right, I've been acting like I'm on top of the world. Like I earned every bit of it on my own. When I looked at you, any of you, I stopped seeing the people who helped me and started seeing what I thought I deserved. Like I... own you, I suppose. Which is wrong. I know. But... I'm an idiot."

My voice came out rough.

"When we went to the convention, I couldn't even enjoy it. All I could think about was how far I'd drifted. I've been selfish, prideful, obsessed with myself. And I'm sorry. You didn't sign up for that. None of you did."

They didn't interrupt. They just listened. Rain slid down the glass behind them, the sound steady and soft.

"I don't deserve you," I said. "Any of you. You're good people. I'm just the guy who got lucky. If you're here because you feel like you owe me something, don't. You don't owe me anything."

Silence hung for a few seconds. Then Tessa broke it with a scoff.

"Shut the fuck up." She flipped open the donut box. "Who wants one?"

I blinked. "What?"

Jasmine laughed, grabbing one with pink frosting. "Seriously, Evan. You think we're keeping score?"

Kim smiled, soft and tired. "You told us what's been on your mind. That means you trust us. That's what matters."

I looked between them, unsure if I'd actually heard them right. "Really?"

Nala reached out and took my hand. "Really. You're allowed to lose yourself sometimes. What matters is you come back."

I didn't know telling the truth could feel this light. I didn't know honesty could take weight off my chest instead of adding more.

I smiled a little. "I, uh—hey, leave me donuts for me!"

Tessa handed me one with mock seriousness. "Egotistical bastards who think like horny monkeys get one."

I rolled my eyes. "Thanks. Appreciate the charity."

The room filled again with laughter. The tension slipped out of the walls. For the first time in days, I felt like I could breathe.

Inside, though, I knew what still waited. I had to fix things with Delilah. Whatever else the world threw at me, that was my mess to clean up.

For now, though, I took a bite of the donut and let myself laugh with them. It felt good to feel normal again, even if it wouldn't last.

♥□♥□♥□

When I got home, everyone had apparently already gone to sleep. All the lights were off, the penthouse silent. I locked the door, walked to the dining table, and peeked around the corner. Good—Minne's old room was empty. Then I headed down the circular hallway and stopped at the closed door where I'd told her to sleep from now on. A faint glow seeped beneath it.

I knocked softly. Moments later the door opened and Minne appeared, wearing a black nightgown and one of those odd facial masks.

"Master," she murmured. "Sorry I answered like this."

"No worries," I replied. "You doing okay?"

"Yes." She rolled her shoulder and winced. "I... never mind."

"What is it?" I pressed, crossing my arms.

"This morning, while trying to put on my cosplay outfit, I hurt my shoulder. It still aches, Master."

"I can fix that. I give a decent massage, believe it or not."

"Really?" She shook her head while removing the mask. "I can't ask you to do that. I'm here to serve, not the other way around."

I chuckled, took her hand, and led her toward the living room. "Stop being so stiff. Come on."

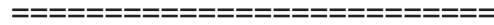
She followed shyly. I gestured for her to sit on the couch, then stepped behind it and opened the Shop. I had enough credits stacked from recent quests; the oil was cheap.



- SHOP



- Aphrodisiac Drink (10c)
- Silk Lingerie Set (25c)
- Sensual Massage Oil (15c)
- Mystery Pleasure Toy (30c)
- Flirt Potion (20c)
- Hypnotic Perfume (40c)
- Time Stop (90c)
- 500 Dollars (50c)
- 1 Ability Point (150c)



- Credits: 40c
- Select item to purchase.



The bottle materialized in my hand with a faint glow. I popped the cap and glanced at her shoulder. The nightgown strap blocked access.

"Which side hurts?"

"Left, Master."

I eased the strap down. Damn, she was adorable—small perky breasts, petite frame, breath hitching at my touch. But I held back. She'd been through hell with Guy. I wasn't him.

I poured oil into my palm and worked it into her shoulder. The moment it touched skin, she gasped, thighs pressing together, eyes fixed on the floor.

"Thank you for always serving me, Minne," I said, kneading gently. "I noticed you changed the sheets today."

"Y-yes..." Her voice trembled. "Jasmine, Nala, and Master had... dirtied the bed this morning. It's my duty, of course."

Nothing sexual happened between Minne and I. I simply massaged the pain away, letting the oil do its work. In five minutes the bottle was empty, and I was certain she'd climaxed four times. I pretended not to notice.

I tossed the bottle in the trash, washed my hands at the kitchen sink, and returned. Minne still sat frozen.

"You can stand now," I told her.

"I..."

Glancing down, I saw the dark wet patch on the couch... wow. It was wet with her juices. I cleared my throat, stepped in front of her, and offered my hand. She hesitated, face crimson, eyes flicking to the stain, then took it and rose.

As she stood, I spotted a bruise on her shoulder the strap had hidden. Earlier, from behind in the dim light, I'd missed it.

I raised a brow, reached for the strap again. She flinched, one hand flying to cover her head, like I was going to smack her. I paused. When she met my gaze, I slid the strap fully aside. She clutched the gown awkwardly to keep her bra covered.

"What's that?" I asked, shining my phone's flashlight on the mark.

"A... whip scar, Master," she whispered. "When my previous Master got angry, he would..."

"Take off the nightgown," I ordered, voice hard. "Now."

"B-but... Okay, Master."

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She let the gown slip away. In any other moment this would have been pure erotic fantasy—a maid stripping for me. Instead it was horror. Bruises mottled her stomach, clear signs of punches. I placed a hand on her shoulder, turned her gently, and saw the whip marks across her back. Ugly, but none looked deep enough to scar permanently. Still, the sight twisted my gut.

"Minne... why did you let him?"

"I... M-Master... I had no choice," she choked, tears spilling.

I bit my lip as she sobbed, shoulders shaking. I pulled her into a hug. She stiffened, then clung to me, tears soaking my shirt. That bastard Guy.

"He hits when I am slow. He hits when I speak out of turn. He called me a piece of furniture once. He said if I did not make people happy he would make sure nobody wanted me." Her words tapered off into a ragged breath.

When the sobs slowed, she sniffed and wiped her face on the back of her hand, mortified by the mess of feelings. "I am sorry I made such a scene," she whispered. "I am useless."

"You are not useless," I said. "You are alive. That matters."

She looked up then, face raw. "You are not like him," she said slowly. "You are not like the others."

I ended the embrace and nodded—more to myself than her. "Go sleep, Minne. You need rest."

"Y-yes, Master." She wiped her face, still sniffling.

I picked up the nightgown and handed it over. She shuffled toward her room, dragging it in one hand. Guy... no. Taking the penthouse wasn't enough. I'd strip him of everything he valued.

"Cunt... fucking cunt..." I growled, fist clenched.

His reign was over.

But I wasn't finished with him.

That night, sleep didn't come at all. Five in the morning and I was still on the couch, staring out the window with a cold beer beside me and the ashtray full. The city below was just a smear of lights and fog. I dragged my hand down my face.

I got her pregnant.

The words kept looping in my head. I should've been happy. In some twisted way, I was. Happier than I'd ever been. But knowing I'd hurt her because I was greedy, because I wanted everything for myself, that feeling didn't stay sweet for long. It turned heavy.

I had something good with Jasmine and the others. For the first time in my life, I was content. I didn't want to ruin that. But then there was Delilah. And the mess I'd made.

"Fuck," I muttered, taking another drink.

A spark clicked behind me, followed by the sharp scent of mint and smoke.

"I knew," a voice said softly, "that she'd corrupt you."

I turned my head.

Karamine stood in the shadows, only a shape against the dim light, one hip resting against the wall, the gold flare of her cigarette lighting her face for an instant.

"Who, Dierella?" I asked, not even surprised anymore. These goddesses showed up whenever they pleased, like bad memories that could walk.

"Of course," she said, exhaling a pale trail of smoke. "That's how she tricks her subjects. She makes them believe they're on top of the world, sitting on a throne."

I looked back at the city. "Hmm."

"I'm disappointed in you, Evan."

"No shit."

The silence between us hummed. The clock ticked loud in the quiet room.

"How do I fix this?" I asked finally. "How do I make it right with Delilah?"

Karamine took another drag, the ember flaring. "Don't lie to yourself, Evan. Jasmine, Kim, Tessa, Nala, Minne, Delilah. You love them all in your own way, and you can't choose."

"I..." I started, but she cut me off.

"That isn't a sin," she said. "I'm the Goddess of Lust. I understand better than anyone. But you tried to deceive her instead of giving her the truth. You tried to keep everyone happy while keeping yourself untouchable."

I stared at my reflection in the glass, tired, messy, eyes ringed in gray. She wasn't wrong. I'd been trying to juggle the whole damn world and somehow expected none of it to fall apart.

My phone buzzed. The vibration made me jump. I picked it up off the table, expecting another useless notification. But it wasn't that.

Delilah.

My throat went dry. I answered immediately.

"Delilah?"

Her voice came through, soft but drained. "Come to my home."

Then the line went dead.

I stared at the screen, heartbeat picking up. She called me at this hour? For what? Another argument? Maybe she just wanted to scream at me, get everything out of her system. I could handle that. I deserved that.

But there was something in her voice, exhaustion, maybe sadness, that twisted in my gut. It didn't sound right.

"Alright," I muttered, setting the beer on the floor. When I looked back toward the wall, Karamine was already gone. Only the faint scent of mint and smoke lingered in the air.

I grabbed my jacket and stood by the door, running a hand through my hair. "Truth," I whispered to myself. "Tell her the truth, Evan."

♥ □ ♥ □ ♥ □

I knocked on her door. The sound felt too loud for how early it was. My hand stayed there for a second, pressed against the cold wood like maybe she wouldn't open it if I didn't move.

A few seconds passed. Then the sound of bare feet on tile came closer.

The lock clicked. The door opened.

Delilah stood there in a gray robe, her hair tied up, messy strands falling over her cheek. Her face looked pale, tired, like she hadn't slept at all. For a moment, she didn't

say anything. She just stared at me, eyes slightly red but dry, like she'd cried herself empty earlier and had nothing left to give.

"Hey," I said softly.

"Come in," she said, her tone flat.

The apartment was dim. The blinds were half open, letting in a dull, gray morning light that cut across the wooden floor. The place smelled faintly like coffee and the sweet scent of baby lotion, something that hit me right in the chest.

I stepped inside quietly, closing the door behind me. A small blanket was folded neatly on the couch. A mug sat beside it, still steaming. Everything else looked untouched.

"Coffee?" she asked as she walked toward the kitchen.

"Sure," I said, voice low.

She didn't look at me while she poured. The soft clink of ceramic filled the silence. I stood there awkwardly, watching her from the edge of the couch. My stomach was tight, my hands restless.

She came back a minute later, handed me a cup, and sat down across from me.

"You look like hell," she said.

"I feel worse."

She gave a half laugh, the kind people make when they're too tired to really mean it. Then she looked down at her cup and stared into it like there was something there only she could see. The silence between us grew heavier by the second.

Finally, she spoke. "You know why I called you, right?"

I nodded slowly. "Because you're mad at me."

She looked up, her eyes locking on mine. "Mad isn't the word for it. I'm tired, Evan. I'm tired of this. Of you, of me, of whatever this mess is supposed to be."

I stayed quiet, waiting. I'd learned that sometimes silence was safer than trying to explain myself.

She set her mug down and rubbed her temple. "You made me believe I wasn't just another mistake for you. That I was different. You said all the right things, made me feel seen for once. And then, what? You went right back to collecting people."

"Collecting people?" I repeated, but my voice sounded weak even to me.

She nodded. "That's what it looks like, Evan. You think you're building a family, but it's not that. You're just... stacking people like trophies. Jasmine, Nala, Kim, whoever else. They're all little pieces of something you can't admit you're missing. You're not trying to love anyone. You're trying to fill a hole."

Her words hit harder than I wanted to admit. I looked down at my coffee, tracing the rim of the mug with my thumb. "It wasn't supposed to be like that."

"Then what was it supposed to be?" she asked. "Because from where I'm standing, you're drowning in attention and calling it happiness.¹

I swallowed, throat tight. "I didn't mean to hurt you."

"But you did." She leaned back, crossing her arms. "You... did."

Her words sank deep, one by one, until they hit something I didn't want to think about.

The clock on the wall ticked quietly, each sound stretching longer than the last.

"I'm not asking for a miracle," she said. "I'm not even asking for perfect. But you need to make a choice. Me and the baby, or them."

I looked up, blinking. "What?"

She didn't flinch. "You heard me. I can't share you, Evan. If you want to be with them, fine. But don't keep me hanging on. Don't keep pretending that you can balance it all."

The air felt heavier. I opened my mouth, but nothing came out at first.

"Delilah—"

"No," she said sharply, cutting me off. "Don't twist it into some speech about understanding or connection. You made a child with me. That means something. It's not just another one of your little adventures. You can't keep living like this doesn't matter."

I rubbed my face, trying to think, but my thoughts were scattered. "It's not that simple," I said finally.

She shook her head. "It is that simple."

She leaned forward, her eyes hard now, voice low but steady. "You can't have both. You can't keep all of us orbiting around you while you figure yourself out. This isn't a game. You're going to be a father. You either step up or you walk away."

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I wanted to tell her I cared about all of them. That it wasn't about collecting people, it was about connection, about finding pieces of myself in everyone I met. But looking at her, I knew she wouldn't believe me. And honestly, I wasn't sure if I believed it either.

"You think you can balance all of this," she said, softer now but still firm. "But it's not balance, Evan. It's chaos. And I can't let my child grow up in that."

The room was silent again, the air thick with words I didn't know how to say. My heart was pounding, my head was spinning.

"Say something," she whispered. "Anything."

I looked down at my hands. "You're right."

Her eyes widened slightly, caught off guard.

"You're right," I said again. "I've been chasing too much. Trying to fill every gap in my life with someone else's love. I thought if I had enough people around me, I'd stop feeling empty. But that's not how it works."

Her shoulders relaxed a little, like she wanted to believe me but didn't trust herself to yet.

"Then you know what you need to do," she said.

I nodded slowly. "Yeah. I do."

"So you'll choose us," she said. Her voice was quieter now, but the edge of anger was still there. "Me and the baby."

The words hit like a weight on my chest. I felt something deep inside me shift, not relief, not exactly pain either, just the sense that something old was closing.

"Yeah," I said finally. "Okay."

Her lip trembled slightly. She blinked fast, trying not to cry. "Good. That's... good."

She looked away for a moment, breathing out slowly. "I didn't think you'd say it that easily."

"It wasn't easy," I said quietly.

She nodded once, still avoiding my eyes. "I believe you." Then she added, "But I want to be there when you tell them. When you break it off."

That made my stomach drop. "You want to be there?"

"Yes," she said. "I don't want there to be any confusion or half-truths. I want them to hear it from you, with me there. I want it to be clear."

I looked at her, unsure what to say. The idea of facing all of them like that, with her watching, made my skin crawl. But I knew she wouldn't back down.

"Okay," I said after a long pause. "If that's what you want."

She checked the clock on the wall. "It's almost eight. They'll be awake soon, right?"

I nodded. "Yeah. Probably."

"Alright then let's go," she said, standing up and pulling her coat from the hanger near the door.

There was no hesitation in her movements. No second guessing. She just moved like she'd been ready for this all night.

I followed her out of the apartment, my heart hammering. The air outside was cold, biting against my face. The street was quiet, the sky dull with early light.

She didn't say a word as we walked to the car I borrowed from Nala. I got in the passenger seat, and the silence stretched between us, heavy and fragile.

The city moved past in blurs of gray and gold. My reflection in the window looked like someone else, someone older, tired, almost hollow. My thoughts drifted one after another.

Jasmine's laugh. Nala's quiet strength. Kim's patience. Tessa's grin when she teased me. Minne's shy smile that still felt like a new start.

Every memory cut into me. Each one was a reminder of what I'd built, what I'd been given, and what I was about to lose.

I clenched my fists on my knees, trying to steady my breathing. Maybe she was right. Maybe this was the only way to stop the bleeding. Maybe this was what being responsible actually looked like.

But deep down, I knew it wasn't that simple. I wasn't doing this because I truly believed it was right. I was doing it because I couldn't stand to see her cry again.

And that truth sat heavier than anything else.

I wanted this to continue, but... she was pregnant. I couldn't just leave her alone like that. I had to take a step forward and take responsibility. For her. For our baby. I had to wake up from this stupid dream. I didn't want to, but I had to—because it was Delilah's wish.

♥□♥□♥□

I unlocked the door and stepped in.

The first person I saw was Nala, a piece of toast in her mouth while she rummaged through her bag. Her face lit up the second she saw me, that usual spark of warmth that made this place feel like something close to home. But the moment her eyes shifted to Delilah standing behind me, and then to the expression on my face, that light vanished. Her smile faltered, fading into confusion.

I stepped inside without saying anything, and neither did Delilah. The room felt too quiet, the kind of silence that eats at you. Nala dropped her bag to the floor, toast forgotten, and looked at me with worried eyes, waiting for an explanation I couldn't yet give.

"Hey," I said finally. My voice came out small, dry. "Can you get the others? Let's meet at the dining table."

"O-okay?" she said slowly. "Where were you? I didn't see you when I woke up."

"Long story," I muttered. "I'll tell you later."

"Okay..."

I hated this. Every step, every breath, every second of this moment. I hated how heavy the air felt, how my chest seemed to tighten with every word I didn't say. But what else could I do? Say no to her, leave her alone again?

Delilah had every right to be angry, to want something real, something steady. She didn't want to live under her daughter's roof, constantly reminded that she'd fallen apart. I knew how much she hated that helplessness, that feeling that her life wasn't hers anymore. And now she was carrying my child. How could I leave her like that?

Delilah and I walked to the dining table and sat down. I could hear the soft click of her heels against the floor, the sound echoing faintly in the wide, open space. She sat with her arms folded, staring down at the table. The morning light from the tall windows made the room look almost too perfect, like something from a photo that didn't belong to either of us.

Seconds later, the others started appearing one by one.

Jasmine and Kim came from their rooms first, both still half-dressed for the day. Jasmine's hair was tied in a messy bun, a half-eaten piece of fruit in her hand. Kim carried her tablet under one arm, frowning slightly when she saw us sitting there together. Then came Tessa, fresh from the shower, towel draped around her neck and her usual grin nowhere to be seen.

"Evan?" Kim said softly as she sat down. "And... Delilah. Hey. What's happening?"

Her tone was careful, like she already sensed something bad.

As the rest of the girls took their seats, the air thickened. My heart was pounding. I cleared my throat, one hand resting on the table, trying to stop it from shaking.

How was I even supposed to start? The words were there, buried somewhere inside me, but they wouldn't come out. Every version of what I wanted to say sounded worse than the last. How could I tell them this was it? That everything we'd built, all the nights, the laughter, the moments that actually felt like family, was about to end?

I couldn't do it.

"Why?" Delilah's voice broke through the silence before I could find the courage.

Everyone's eyes turned to her.

"Why do you all stay with Evan?" she asked, her voice clear, almost too calm.

"What?" Jasmine blinked, confused.

"You heard me." Delilah leaned forward slightly, resting her elbows on the table. "I know what kind of relationship you all have with him. I'm simply asking... why?"

"Delilah..." I began, but the words caught in my throat.

She didn't look at me. Her gaze stayed fixed on the girls, unflinching.

Jasmine shared a look with Tessa. Nala glanced at Kim. Nobody spoke. For a few seconds, it was dead silent, the kind of silence that stretches until it hurts.

Then Jasmine cleared her throat and met Delilah's eyes. "What is this all about, Delilah?" she asked. Her tone was sharper now, defensive.

"Why?" Delilah said again, her voice colder this time. "Why do you all... stay around him? Don't you think he's using you?"

The words hit like a slap.

The girls stayed silent again, glancing between each other, then back at me. They looked more confused than angry, like they were still trying to figure out what exactly was happening.

And I just stood there, feeling smaller by the second. What was she trying to do? Humiliate me in front of them? Break whatever tiny bit of peace was left?

Man... wasn't this enough...

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The silence stretched, uncomfortable and sharp. No one wanted to speak first. I could feel Delilah's eyes sweeping over each of them, searching for someone to crack, someone to admit something ugly.

Finally Jasmine exhaled through her nose, set her elbows on the table, and looked right at her.

"You think he's using us?" she said quietly. "That's not it."

Delilah's brow arched. "Then what is it, exactly? Because from where I'm standing, it looks like you've all just... accepted being one of many."

"That's not fair," Nala said softly.

"Isn't it?" Delilah's voice carried an edge. "You share him. You know that. You act like it doesn't bother you, but—"

"Because it doesn't," Jasmine interrupted, her voice firm this time. "I'm not here because I need someone to own me. I'm here because he makes this place feel... normal. Like I can breathe again. I don't expect him to fix me or marry me or whatever fantasy you think we're all living in."

Delilah blinked, caught off guard by Jasmine's tone.

Tessa leaned back, crossing her arms. "Yeah. We're not his toys. You think any of us don't see his flaws? He's stubborn, he's reckless, and he's got no clue how to say no to someone in need. That's what got him into this mess in the first place." She smirked faintly. "But using us? No. He's the one who ends up getting used half the time."

"That's true," Nala murmured, her voice trembling a little. "When Guy had me cornered, I thought I was done. Evan didn't owe me anything, but he risked everything anyway. He... didn't even ask for anything in return. I think that's when I realised he doesn't really know how to take from people. He just gives until there's nothing left."

Delilah looked between them, her expression faltering. I could see her jaw tighten, the anger still there but struggling to find ground to stand on.

Kim was quiet for a long time before speaking. "It's not romantic for all of us," she said slowly. "Not in the way you think. Some of us needed a person who listens. Someone solid. Someone who doesn't run the second things get ugly. That's what Evan is."

"An anchor," Jasmine said suddenly, finishing Kim's thought.

Kim nodded. "Yeah. That's the word."

Anchor. The word hung in the air, simple but heavy. It hit me harder than I wanted to admit.

Delilah gave a short, bitter laugh. "An anchor. That's what you call it?"

Tessa shrugged. "Call it what you want. We all had our storms, Delilah. He was just the one stupid enough to stand in the middle and not move."

The room went quiet again. Delilah's anger looked like it was melting into something else, confusion, maybe. Sadness. She stared at her hands, tracing the edge of her coffee cup with a thumb.

"I thought I was the only one who saw that in him," she said finally. Her voice was small, quieter than I'd ever heard it.

"You weren't wrong for seeing it," Kim said gently. "You just didn't know you weren't alone."

Delilah gave a dry laugh. "That makes it sound so simple."

"It's not simple," Nala said. "None of this is. We argue. We get jealous sometimes. But we don't hate each other for it. Because we know why we're all here. He... keeps us grounded."

I wanted to say something then, to thank them, to tell them how much those words meant, but my throat was too tight. All I could do was listen, heart pounding, afraid that one wrong word would shatter the fragile peace forming in the room.

Delilah looked at me then, her eyes softer now. "You really didn't tell them, did you?"

"Tell us what?" Jasmine asked, sitting up straighter.

Delilah sighed, rubbed her temples, then met my eyes again. "You should tell them."

My pulse spiked.

"Delilah," I whispered, but she shook her head.

"No. They deserve to know what they're signing up for." She stood slowly, placing both palms on the table, steadyng herself. "You all talk about him like he's the one holding you together. But what if that anchor starts to sink? What if the weight drags you all down too?"

Her voice trembled, but she didn't stop.

"Because that's what happens when you tie yourselves to someone. You don't just share the good parts. You share everything. The mistakes, the fear, the guilt. The... consequences."

The word hung there, sharp and loaded.

She looked at me again, eyes glistening.

"I'm pregnant," she said finally. "With Evan's baby."

The air left the room.

No one moved. No one breathed. Even the hum of the refrigerator seemed to fade away.

My heart was pounding so hard I thought I might throw up. I couldn't read any of their faces, shock, confusion, disbelief, maybe all of it at once.

Delilah exhaled, voice quieter now. "How do you all feel about that?"

The girls stayed frozen. Jasmine's mouth opened, then closed again. Nala stared at Delilah like she hadn't heard right.

Kim was the first to move. She leaned back in her chair, exhaled slowly, and said, "Well... boy or a girl?"

The tension cracked just like that.

Delilah blinked, startled, and then a sound slipped out, the tiniest laugh. It started small, awkward, like she didn't mean to. But then it grew, soft at first, then warmer, rolling out of her chest until she was actually laughing. Not mockingly. Just... freely.

She wiped at her eyes, smiling through it. The girls watched her, half-smiling themselves, the fear in the room easing bit by bit.

For the first time that morning, it felt like the world wasn't collapsing, just bending into something new, something strange, but maybe still survivable.

Delilah's laughter faded slowly, tapering off into a quiet sigh. For a heartbeat, there was peace, the kind that comes right after a storm, when you think maybe the worst is over. But then her breath hitched.

It was so sudden I almost missed it.

Her smile trembled, then vanished entirely. Her eyes glossed over, and before anyone could react, tears began to roll down her cheeks.

"Delilah?" I said softly.

She tried to speak, but it came out as a broken sound, half laugh, half sob. She covered her mouth with her hand, shoulders shaking. The room froze again, the air pulling tight.

I stood, but Jasmine was faster. She crossed the table in two steps and knelt beside Delilah's chair, resting a hand on her arm. Kim joined her without a word, sliding a tissue box closer. Tessa moved to her other side, wrapping an arm around her shoulder, whispering something none of us could hear.

Even Nala stood up, circling behind her chair, her eyes glistening too. For a moment, it didn't feel like they were comforting a stranger. It was like they all knew exactly what that kind of crying meant, the kind that came when you'd held it in too long.

Delilah tried to speak again. "I'm sorry," she managed between sobs. "I just... I didn't think I'd end up here. I thought... I thought I'd hate you all. But I don't. I don't."

Her voice broke completely on the last word.

I wanted to say something. Anything. But my throat felt locked shut. All that came out was a breath. I took a step forward, hand half-raised, but I stopped when I saw how they looked at her, how careful they were, how gentle. This wasn't my moment to fix.

Nala turned then, her eyes finding mine. She gave me a small, understanding look, the kind that said everything without needing words.

"I think we should talk," she said quietly. "Girl talk." She hesitated, then added, "You know?"

I swallowed, nodded once.

"Can you head to TechForge for now?" she continued. "I'll meet you there later."

"Yeah," I said finally, though it came out barely above a whisper.

Delilah still had her face buried in her hands, the other girls murmuring soft things around her. I wanted to reach out, to pull her close, but all I could do was stand there uselessly.

I took one last breath, then turned toward the door. The floor creaked under my steps, the sound of quiet sobs fading behind me. My hand found the handle.

When I opened the door, the morning light spilled in from the corridor, cool and pale against my face.

I looked back one last time. The five of them sat gathered around the table, not divided anymore, not fighting. Just... human.

I exhaled, heavy and slow, then stepped out and closed the door behind me.

I stepped into the elevator and pressed the button for the ground floor. The ride felt endless, like time was dragging on, each second stretching into eternity. I could feel the sweat starting to bead on my forehead, my hands trembling. Nervous energy buzzed through me, and I couldn't shake the feeling that I had no idea how I ended up in this mess.

The elevator doors finally opened, and I stepped out into the lobby, not daring to look up. I kept my gaze fixed on the floor as I made my way to the exit, the weight of the moment pressing down on me. Outside, I fumbled through my pocket for a cigarette.

"Fuck... what now?" I muttered to myself, the words tasting like smoke before they even left my mouth.

♥ □ ♥ □ ♥ □

Chapter 177: Chapter 177

Just what in the hell was that?

I sat behind my desk, eyes fixed on a random corner of the wall, replaying the morning over and over again. Delilah crying. The girls around her. The way she broke down and then... what? She said she thought she'd hate them, but by the end, she looked almost at peace. Was she worse now or better? I couldn't tell anymore.

Four hours. Four damn hours. Nala still hadn't shown up at the office. What were they talking about that long? Every minute that passed chewed away at my nerves. I needed answers—but at the same time, I didn't. Part of me was terrified to know what they'd decided.

"Who are you?"

The voice snapped me out of my head. I turned left and saw a woman standing by the door, hand on her hip, sharp brown eyes behind even sharper glasses.

She looked... familiar. But from where?

She had that kind of face you didn't forget easily—high cheekbones, tied-up hair so neat it could slice paper, lips that looked naturally stern, and a body that made it hard to focus on anything else. Slim waist, thick thighs, a chest that her button-up blouse was doing its best to contain.

I blinked, trying to remember. "I'm, uh, Nala's secretary," I said. "Well, one of them. Apparently, she's got two now. What do you know."

"Mm." She nodded slightly, unimpressed. "Is she in her room? I need to talk to her about the Phoenix Project."

"No, not yet," I said. Then it hit me. "Wait... I know you from somewhere. What was your name again? I swear I've seen you before."

"On the bus," she said flatly. "You asked which perfume I was using."

"Oh. Crap, yeah." I scratched the back of my neck. "Sorry about that, by the way. It probably came off like I was hitting on you. I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable—"

She cut me off with a glare sharp enough to pin me to the chair. "You should be kissing Nala's ass, not mine, kid," she said, already turning to leave. "Call extension 7# when she arrives. That's my office number."

"Yup," I muttered.

She walked off, heels clicking against the tile floor. I shouldn't have been watching, but I did. Her tight black pants were perfectly cut, professional but—well, let's just say she didn't need to try hard to leave an impression.

If I wasn't already sweating bullets over Delilah and whatever the hell was happening at home, maybe I'd have let myself enjoy the view. But right now? I couldn't focus on anything. I was too wired, too anxious. My thoughts wouldn't stay still.

What were they talking about this long? About me? About them? About us?

I slumped back in my chair, rubbing my temples.

And despite everything, I caught myself smiling. Anchor. They called me that. The word echoed in my head like it meant something. It shouldn't have—it was just a metaphor. But damn, hearing that had made something inside me tighten. Like for once, I mattered.

My phone buzzed.

I froze when I saw the name: Ivy.

Shit.

She didn't know. She couldn't know. If she ever found out about her mother... about the baby... that was the end of everything.

I cleared my throat and picked up. "Ivy?"

"Hey, Evan," she said. Her voice was soft, calm, that same friendly tone that always made me feel both relaxed and guilty. "Sorry I'm calling you this early. Were you awake?"

She had no idea. Not about the penthouse. Not about Delilah. Not about any of it. I'd kept her out of that world for a reason. At least until I figured out how to handle the disaster I'd made.

"Yeah," I said, forcing a smile she couldn't see. "What's up?"

"Mom's not picking up," she said. "She didn't have work today. I called a few times."

"She's not home, huh?" I said, trying to sound casual. "When I talked to her about that keyboard issue, she told me she'd be going out with some friends."

"When was that?"

"Yesterday," I lied smoothly. "Yeah, we talked yesterday. I think she just needed some time off, you know? Clear her head."

Ivy was quiet for a moment. "Mm... maybe you're right. Okay. Just let me know if you see her or something, alright?"

"Yeah," I said quickly. "Of course."

"Alright. Bye, Evan." Then her tone softened a little, teasing. "You still owe me that coffee, don't forget."

"Roger that, ma'am."

She giggled and hung up.

As soon as I set the phone down, it buzzed again. I groaned.

Mendy.

I hesitated before answering. The last time I'd seen her was at the police station, when everything with her stalker had gone down.

I picked up. "Hey, Mendy."

She exhaled on the other end before speaking. "Oh, Evan. Hope I'm not catching you too early."

"No, not at all," I said. "What's up?"

"Just checking in," she said. "We didn't really talk after the police thing. I wanted to see how you were."

"I'm fine," I said automatically. "How about you?"

"Same old," she sighed.

"How's Penelope?" I asked. "Still shaken up after... everything?"

"Shaken?" she repeated, then laughed quietly. "Penelope's stronger than me, Evan. Always has been."

"Last I checked, you got your stalker arrested," I said. "If that's not strong, I don't know what is."

There was a pause. Then my eyes widened as a memory clicked into place.

"Oh my god," I said suddenly. "That's why you called me, isn't it?"

"Huh?"

"The panties," I said, facepalming.

"Oh, god, Evan..." she groaned, half-laughing, half-mortified. "I completely forgot about that! Please tell me you still have them."

"I do," I said, trying not to laugh. "I'll swing by when I get the chance and return them. Promise."

"Please," she said, her voice flustered but warm. "I'd... appreciate that."

"Cool. Then I'll give you a call first so I don't just show up unannounced."

"Yes, that would be... better."

We both chuckled, the awkwardness fading into a comfortable silence.

"Well," I said, leaning back in my chair. "Guess I'll see you soon."

"Yeah," she said softly. "Bye, Evan."

"Bye."

The call ended.

Everything was starting to blur together, the penthouse, TechForge, the girls, Delilah, the baby.

I took a deep breath, ran a hand through my hair, and muttered to myself, "Just what the hell are you doing, Evan..."

The city hummed faintly beyond the glass walls of the office, the world still moving forward while I sat there, completely still.

I grabbed my phone, unlocked it—and froze. Sarah. Not Sarah Lin from the board. Sarah, Vanessa's rabid lapdog. The one who'd sent Delilah death threats, snapped upskirt photos, orchestrated the blackmail. She sauntered toward me, hips swaying, eyes never leaving mine. Then she planted a manicured hand on my desk and leaned in.

"Huh?"

"Evan." Her voice dripped honey. "What a surprise."

"What the fuck are you doing here?" I hissed.

"Guy says hi." She purred. "Actually, scratch that. He says just 'fuck you.' Rude guy, huh?"

"How are you not—"

"Behind bars?" She tilted her head, smirking. "Guy's lawyers, sweetheart. A little cash here, a little file there. Some people call it corruption. I call it networking."

"You're insane."

"Mmm. I've been called worse." She rested her elbows on the desk, leaning closer. "Anyway, I'm the new operations coordinator here. TechForge wanted someone familiar with Guy's older systems. Guess who fit the bill?"

"You're kidding."

"You wish I was." She smiled with teeth, the kind of smile that could draw blood. "Seems the HR team didn't bother to check references when the board fast-tracked my hire. You know how it goes, Guy still has friends up there. A few of the old guard owe him favors. One call from him, a few doctored recommendation letters, and poof. I'm in. Welcome aboard, right?"

I blinked at her, completely stunned. "You're saying the board hired you? Nala would never sign off on that."

"Of course she didn't." Sarah brushed an invisible speck of dust from her sleeve, pretending to look bored. "That's the best part. She didn't even know. Apparently, one of the 'senior advisors' signed off the approval packet before it hit her desk. Happens all the time. Bureaucracy, honey. Beautiful chaos."

I stood, my jaw tightening. "Then you're gone the second she finds out."

She gave a soft, mocking laugh. "You really think that'll help? I'm bulletproof, Evan. I was hired on a fixed-term consultancy under the board's discretion. Firing me without cause would trigger a breach clause, and TechForge doesn't need another lawsuit. Not with Meridian still haunting their books."

My eyes narrowed. "Meridian?"

"Mmm." She reached into her sleek black folder and pulled out a thin stack of papers, sliding it toward me like a dealer tossing cards.

I looked down. Internal report format. TechForge letterhead. The title made my stomach knot: MERIDIAN ACQUISITION – COMPLIANCE SUMMARY.

"What is this?"

"Proof," she said, tapping the top sheet with her nail. "Proof of how dirty Guy played, and how he made Nala play along."

"Nala had nothing to do with his scams."

Sarah tilted her head like a cat toying with something small and trembling. "Didn't she? See, Guy might've been a monster, but he was smart. When he was still CEO, he made sure his sister signed every major acquisition and audit. VP of Strategy at the time, perfect paper trail. Every dirty move went out with her name under it."

I frowned. "Wait—so there's an open lawsuit? Is that what you're saying?"

Sarah rolled her eyes. "Please. No one's suing anyone. Yet. Meridian's just... a stain the company keeps pretending isn't there. Legal skeletons in a very expensive closet. But if someone like me were to, say, open that door? People would start screaming."

My pulse quickened. "Go on."

"Well, what was I saying? Oh, yeah, yeah, when the Meridian deal came up, there were red flags all over it. Patent infringement, ghost vendors, shell accounts... all the fun stuff." She smiled faintly. "Nala wanted to kill the deal. But Guy? He had other plans. He told her if she didn't sign off on the falsified due diligence report, he'd destroy her. Personal videos. Emails. The kind of things that never disappear."

My stomach dropped. "You're saying he blackmailed her."

"Of course he did. He's family, remember?" Sarah laughed under her breath, quiet and cruel. "Blood doesn't make people kind, it just gives them access."

"You're lying," I said, though it didn't sound convincing even to me.

"Uuh, no?" She straightened her blouse. "She signed. The board never looked closer. Meridian went through, TechForge got its quarterly boost, and Guy walked away with a multi-million-dollar bonus. Meanwhile, your lovely CEO? She got to carry the guilt while her brother toasted champagne on her signature."

I felt heat creeping up my neck. "You expose that, and Guy goes down with her."

Sarah grinned. "You think he cares? Guy's already overseas, Singapore, Dubai, something flashy. New company, new name, same greed. But Nala? She's still here. She's the one holding the bag now. The board doesn't forgive, Evan. It feeds."

"So what—Guy sent you here to finish her off? To leak this?"

She smiled, slow and serpentine. "That was the plan. He trusted me to bring Nala down, make her choke on the mess he left behind."

I hesitated. "And you're... doing this out of loyalty?"

Sarah's laugh was sharp and sudden. "Loyalty? Oh, honey, please. I don't give a damn about Guy. He thinks I'm still his little errand girl, but I don't work for him anymore. Not after that... interesting video. Surprised? Yes, I know about that safe thing. He can't make me do anything. Any FUCKING thing." She tapped the folder again, nails clicking against the cover. "I work for myself."

My throat went dry. "Meaning?"

"Meaning this stays buried," she said, voice dropping to a whisper. "Two million a month. That's the price of silence. Nala pays, I forget I ever saw these files. Everyone stays happy."

"You're blackmailing her."

She shrugged. "I'm giving her an option. Two million for peace of mind. Seems like a bargain compared to public humiliation, don't you think?"

"You're disgusting," I muttered.

She gave a fake pout. "Flattery won't get you anywhere, handsome."

Then she gathered her folder, winked, and turned toward the hallway.

"Oh, and Evan?" she called over her shoulder, her heels clicking against the tile. "Next time you see Nala, tell her her past is catching up. I'll be around."

She walked off, hips swaying, perfume trailing behind her like smoke from a fire that never really went out. I stared at the elevator long after she was gone, heart pounding.

Guy had strings everywhere. Even with him gone, they were still pulling.

"Well, fuck," I whispered.

I slumped back into my chair, head in my hands. The paper lay on the desk, heavy as a confession.

"I want my gas-station job back."

♥□♥□♥□

Chapter 178: Chapter 178

Great. As if I didn't have enough problems, now that Meridian thing was in that list, too. Yay. But, one problem at a time. Delilah. I needed to see how she was doing and, well, what she said after I left the penthouse.

With an exhale, I opened the door and stepped inside. Jasmine was sitting at the dinner table, Tessa next to her, both on their laptops, screens glowing in the dim room.

"H-hey," I said, taking a deep breath. "I'm back from work. Where is everyone?"

Jasmine looked up. "Nala's taking a shower. Kim's napping."

"Got it," I said. "Where's... Delilah?"

"Back at her apartment," Jasmine said. "Nala dropped her off. I didn't even know the company gave her a damn car, Evan. If we start working there, do we get one too?"

"Jeez, I don't know," I said, walking closer. "I don't care about the car right now, Jasmine. How was Delilah? Last time I saw her, she was crying on the chair you're sitting on right now."

"She was fine," Tessa replied, still staring at her screen. "Asked us a bunch of questions. Like if we were with you, why that, why this."

"Anchor," I said, nodding as I looked out the window. "That... was really nice. Thank you, girls."

"Hey," Jasmine nudged Tessa. "Maybe we really do glaze his ego like Delilah said, huh?"

"Yeah, I'm starting to think that too," Tessa muttered, hiding a grin.

"Ah, come on," I said. "I'm just happy that you guys see me like that."

"Don't get all mushy now," Jasmine said. "And stop bothering us, please. We're working. Nala's homework. It sucks."

"Well, don't let me interrupt you," I said, then turned and headed for the master bedroom.

I shut the door, peeled off my shirt, and sat on the edge of the bed, grabbing my phone. Right. Whatever this Meridian project was, I needed to know what the hell it actually was—and what I was up against.

A quick search later, I frowned. Meridian Technologies. A cybersecurity firm TechForge had acquired two years ago. They'd built something called the Sentinel Framework, AI-based defense software meant to detect and neutralize large-scale cyberattacks before they even started. It was supposed to be the company's golden goose—military-grade predictive security for government networks.

Only problem? The article I found mentioned a quiet investigation by the Digital Ethics Commission. Allegations that Meridian's data models had been trained using illegally harvested personal information from government servers. That they'd broken into restricted archives to feed their AI, copying classified data to make the system smarter.

I leaned back on the bed, rubbing my eyes. Of course. That was what Sarah meant. TechForge's "crown jewel" wasn't clean.

I scrolled further—Meridian was still active, now fully absorbed under TechForge's R&D division. Nala's signature was on every official document. She'd been VP of Strategy at the time.

The pieces fit too well.

If Guy really had blackmailed her into signing off on that deal, the entire project was a ticking bomb. If the wrong people found out, it wouldn't just destroy Nala—it'd drag down everyone tied to TechForge.

"Perfect," I muttered, tossing the phone on the bed. "Just what I needed."

For a moment, I just sat there, staring at the ceiling, the faint hum of the city filtering through the glass. I thought of Nala's calm voice, the way she looked when she pretended not to be scared.

And I realized Sarah wasn't bluffing.

Whatever Meridian was hiding, it was bad. Real bad.

I sat on the edge of the bed, elbows on my knees, staring at the carpet like it owed me money. Things were... rough.

The bedroom door opened. Nala stepped in with nothing but a towel knotted above her tits, water still dripping from her hair. "Sorry," she whispered, cheeks pink, "I didn't know you were home."

I didn't answer.

Nala padded to the dresser. She let the towel fall. It pooled at her feet and she stood naked for a second, droplets sliding down the curve of her spine, over the swell of her ass, and off the soft lips between her thighs. She picked up a black lace thong, stepped in slow, bent forward so the string snapped tight against her skin.

Next came the matching bra; she slid her arms through, lifted each heavy breast into the cups, and hooked it between them so her nipples poked stiff against the lace.

A loose white button-down followed, top three buttons open, the bra peeking out every time she breathed. Last, tiny cotton sleep shorts that hugged her hips and barely covered the bottom curve of her ass. When she was done, she sat at the edge of the bed to comb through her hair. We were only at arm's length.

She turned, hair damp, and caught me staring. "You okay?" she asked.

"No," I said quietly. "What's Meridian?"

She paused mid-stroke, then slowly turned to look at me. "What?"

"I said, what's Meridian?"

Her eyes narrowed slightly. "How do you know that name?"

"Someone came by the office," I said. "A woman named Sarah. Apparently sent by your brother."

At the mention of Guy, her expression hardened.

"Just answer me, please," I added.

She set the comb down on the nightstand and leaned back, arms crossed loosely. "Meridian was one of Guy's projects," she said finally. "A cybersecurity firm that built predictive AI systems for defense clients. When I was still VP of Strategy, he forced me to sign off on their acquisition, even after I told him it was unstable. Their tech used data pulled illegally from government servers—massive privacy violations. I wanted to kill the deal."

"And he blackmailed you."

She nodded once. "He had footage. Old, private things from when I still lived with him. He said if I didn't sign, he'd release them and tell the board I falsified numbers to impress him. So I signed. And I've hated myself for it ever since."

I clenched my jaw. "He's still playing you. Sarah said he gave her everything—proof, documents. She's not trying to expose you, though. She wants money. Two million a month, or she'll hand it all to the board and the press."

"Two million?" she repeated, disbelief cutting through her voice. She shook her head slowly. "That's insane. Even if we could afford that, it would never end. She'd just keep coming back."

"Yeah," I said, rubbing my temples. "I don't know what we should do. I'm not exactly experienced in this whole thing. I used to be a gas station clerk, for fuck's sake."

For a moment, she didn't say anything—just stared at the expensive carpet beneath our feet, lost in thought.

"I'll try to figure something out," she said finally, her voice quieter now. "Hopefully."

I looked at her, then placed a hand on her shoulder. She turned slightly, eyes tired but calm. I pulled her gently into a hug, her head resting against my chest.

"Whatever happens," I murmured, "I'll be with you. Okay?"

She smiled faintly against me and nodded. "Okay."

Nala exhaled, long and tired, then shoved my chest. I toppled backward onto the mattress, legs still hanging off the edge. She crawled up beside me, rolled onto her

side, and dropped her head on my chest. The coconut scent of her shampoo filled my nose.

"What happened with Delilah while I was gone?" I asked.

"We talked," Nala said, tracing lazy circles on my shirt. "All the girls did. We promised we wouldn't spill. Sorry."

"That's not fair..."

"She's pregnant, huh." She let the words hang, then sighed. "I'm... for some stupid reason I got a little jealous. Don't know why."

I wrapped an arm around her. "It was... let's not talk about that."

"Are you not happy you're going to be a father?"

"If Delilah hates me, no. If we make up... maybe."

Nala lifted her head. "She told us you came here today ready to end everything with us. Said you wanted to be with her and the baby."

"She gave me an ultimatum," I admitted. "Her and the kid, or the girls. Nala, I couldn't leave a pregnant woman on the street. I'm sorry."

"No need to be sorry." She poked my ribs. "That means you're a man who takes responsibility. More than my dad ever did."

"Having common sense counts as responsibility now?"

She giggled, the sound vibrating against my chest. Then she propped herself up on one elbow and looked straight at me. Our eyes locked. A second later our lips met, slow and soft, tasting coconut and toothpaste.

I pulled back an inch. "You sure you won't tell me what you girls said to Delilah?"

"Nope."

"You wanted this," I grinned. "Tickle time."

My fingers attacked her waist. She didn't even flinch. Just stared at me, deadpan, then burst out laughing.

"I'm not ticklish, genius." She rolled off the bed, fixed her shirt where it had ridden up, and smoothed the shorts over her ass. "I have to get to the office. Work's probably a war zone since I vanished."

"You want me back behind the desk?" I teased.

"I want you under my desk," she shot back, then slapped both hands over her mouth. Her face went nuclear red. "Oh my god, Jasmine swore that line would sound hot. It was SO BAD. I hate myself. I wanna cut my tongue out. It was so bad, so bad, so bad, so bad. God..."

I shrugged, smirking. "I mean... I wouldn't say no."

Nala squeaked, spun, and bolted out the door like her ass was on fire.

The room went quiet except for the hum of the city thirty floors below. I flopped back, stared at the ceiling, and laughed under my breath.

"Anchor, huh..." I muttered. "I like that word. Should get it tattooed on my forehead. Anchor."

♥□♥□♥□

Chapter 179: Chapter 179

I dialed Delilah and waited. Behind me, Minne was clearing the table, carrying the empty dishes to the kitchen. Dinner had been good, really good. I couldn't remember the last time I'd eaten that well. No more noodles and beer.

The sun was going down, bathing the neon-filled city in a soft golden glow. The view from the penthouse was calm, almost too calm. As I watched the skyline through the window, the final beep sounded.

No answer. Shit. She didn't pick up again.

I exhaled, putting the phone in my pocket. Damn it.

Tessa was lying across my legs, her head resting on my lap while she scrolled through her phone. On the other couch, Jasmine and Kim sat with Nala between them, all three hunched over their laptops. Looked like Nala was showing them something work-related, probably getting them ready for their first day at TechForge.

"I hope what's under my head is your phone, Evan," Tessa said with a sly grin.

"It is," I said, pulling it out of my pocket.

"Wow. Miracles do happen."

I leaned back against the couch, letting out a slow breath. I wasn't in the mood for much of anything. All I could think about was Delilah. Where the hell was she? Was she okay? And why was everyone keeping me in the dark? Man... this sucked.

I tried to keep myself calm and behaved. When I'd moved my hand earlier, almost resting it on Tessa's tits, I'd stopped midway and rubbed the back of my neck instead, pretending it itched. No need to give her another reason to call me a 'horny monkey.'

"You look stressed," Tessa said, setting her phone on her stomach. "Nervous about Delilah, magic fingers?"

"A bit," I admitted.

"When Evan said he'd give us massages," Nala said, glancing up, "you girls were way too excited. Is he actually that good?"

"Oh, he's good," Jasmine said. "Freaking perfect. He's got some kind of secret technique, I swear."

"Hence 'magic fingers,' Nala," Tessa added. "Or, you know, 'Magic Boy.'"

"Cute." Nala chuckled, turning back to the screen. "Anyway, yeah, don't click there, Jas. You want that folder instead."

A buzz on my phone pulled me back. Hoping it was Delilah, I didn't even check the screen—I just swiped up and answered.

"Hello?"

"Evan Henrik Marlowe." A woman's voice. Calm, steady, unfamiliar. "Hey."

"Who is this?"

"Sarah," she said. "Remember?"

"Sarah..." I exhaled, rubbing my face.

My hand brushed over Tessa's head before I stood up. She felt the change instantly and looked up at me. So did Jasmine, Nala, and Kim. They all lifted their eyes from their laptops, watching, waiting.

"Missed me?"

"No." I walked toward the dining table, leaning against the wall. "What do you want?"

"Just checking in," she said. "Have you thought about my deal?"

"You're crazy," I said. "Two million a month is too much."

"Too much? With everything I have, that could cost your company dearly."

"Look... let's talk. Face to face. You, Nala, and me."

"No negotiations," she said sharply. "I'm not backing down, Evan."

"You... Jesus, how did you get this number?"

"Henrik, huh? Weird middle name. I don't like it."

"Stop changing the subject, Sarah," I said. "Let's have a meeting."

Silence. Then, "Okay. Tomorrow. Nala's office. Eight in the morning."

"Hmm." I muttered. "Don't call me again."

"Can't promise," she sneered, her voice turning hard. "After you humiliated me in that bar? You're in for real shit, Evan. Real fucking shit."

I hung up and shook my head. The girls were watching me, but no one said anything. I took a cigarette from my pocket, lit it, and stared out the window. Guy—this was on him. I had to tell Anotta what he was doing behind the scenes. If we could pressure Guy, maybe he'd call off his dog, Sarah.

"I gotta go," I said, blowing out smoke.

"Where? Who was it?" Tessa asked. "Another girl? You should just tell us, man. Come on."

"Nala can explain," I said. "I need to meet with someone."

Jasmine closed her laptop. "Evan, are you okay?"

I shrugged, offering a faint smile. "Eh. Five out of ten okay."

"Don't joke right now," Kim said. "You look pale. What did that person say? Sarah, was it?"

"Master," Minne said, walking toward me. "Did you talk to Sarah?"

I turned toward her, cigarette between my fingers. "Yeah. Do you know her?"

She nodded shyly. "She was the one who found my previous mast—Guy a p... pro—prost..."

"Pros?" I asked.

"A... an elite working woman," Minne said, her face reddening.

"Hooker?" Jasmine asked.

Minne nodded. "Yes. She found Guy an elite... woman. Her name was Eleanor."

"Eleanor..." I muttered. "Maybe Guy told stuff about work to her?"

Nala exhaled. "No way."

"Worth a try," I said. "The more dirt I find on him, the better. Where can I find this hooker, Minne?"

"He would call the hotel reception from his bedroom phone," Minne said. "The number was #31. Then he would request Eleanor."

I nodded. "Hmm. Minne, I want you to request Eleanor. She needs to be here at ten, okay?" Then I turned toward the girls. "Could you stay in the rooms below for the night?"

They all nodded.

"Alright. Let's see what I can get from her..." I muttered.

"You look... determined," Jasmine said. "Not gonna lie, it suits you."

"Being serious and nervous suits me?" I asked.

"You don't look nervous." Jasmine got up, set the laptop aside, and stood behind me, massaging my shoulders. "Just determined."

I smiled, turned my head, and kissed her. "Thanks."

Minne blushed at the sight, then quickly retreated to the kitchen. Cute.

Alright... first, I had to meet Anotta. Then this woman, Eleanor.

Man... a long day was waiting for me.

Tessa shifted on the couch, her eyes locked on mine, that sly grin fading into something more intense.

"You know, I've been teasing you since dinner," Tessa said, her voice low and playful, but with an edge of frustration. She sat up fully now, swinging her legs off the couch and planting her feet on the floor. "All those little touches, the way I leaned in, brushing

against you... and you didn't advance, didn't touch me or anything. What's the deal, Evan? Getting shy on us?"

I took a drag from the cigarette, exhaling slowly as I glanced at her. The others, Jasmine, Kim, and Nala, were still on the other couch, their laptops forgotten, eyes flicking between us. Minne was clattering dishes in the kitchen, out of sight but not out of earshot.

"I didn't want to make you guys uncomfortable," I said, my voice steady but my pulse picking up. "I didn't give that speech in the office for nothing."

Tessa rolled her eyes, but there was a spark in them, a challenge. She stood up smoothly, crossing the short distance to me until she was right beside me, shoulder to shoulder, her body heat radiating through her shirt. Without breaking eye contact, her hand drifted down, fingers deftly finding the zipper of my pants. She tugged it down slowly and before I could react, my half-hard cock sprang free, thickening in the cool air of the penthouse. The sudden exposure made me twitch, but I didn't pull away.

"Just fuck us, big boy," Tessa whispered, her hand wrapping around my shaft, giving it a slow, teasing stroke that sent a jolt straight through me. "Don't be a wuss. If you want something..." She paused, her free hand moving to her own shirt, popping the buttons one by one, revealing the lacy black bra underneath, her full breasts straining against the fabric. "...come and get it."

The words hung in the air, igniting something primal in the room. Jasmine's eyes widened, but she licked her lips, setting her laptop aside completely. Kim shifted, her cheeks flushing, while Nala let out a soft, breathy laugh, closing her own screen. My cock hardened fully in Tessa's grip, throbbing as she pumped it lazily, her thumb circling the head.

"Shush, girls," I muttered, glancing toward the kitchen. "Minne's in there. We can't—"

Tessa smirked, not missing a beat. "Minne!" she called out, her voice carrying just enough to summon the maid without shouting.

Minne appeared in the doorway a second later, wiping her hands on her apron, her eyes going wide as she took in the scene—Tessa's hand blatantly stroking my exposed cock, my pants halfway down my thighs now.

Minne's face turned beet red, her gaze dropping to the floor. "Y-yes, Miss Tessa?"

Tessa's grin widened, her strokes never faltering. "You earned a break, honey. Go to your room."

Minne nodded furiously, not daring to look up again, and scurried off down the hall, the door clicking shut behind her. The tension in the living room snapped like a rubber

band, and just like that, we were alone—me, Tessa, Jasmine, Kim, and Nala, the city lights twinkling outside as the sun dipped fully below the horizon.

Tessa didn't waste time. She shoved me back against the wall gently, her shirt hanging open, and dropped to her knees in front of me. "See? Problem solved. Now, where were we?" Her mouth engulfed the head of my cock, sucking hard, her tongue swirling as she took me deeper. I groaned, my hand tangling in her hair, the cigarette forgotten as I stubbed it out in a nearby ashtray.

The others moved fast. Jasmine was the first to join, crawling over on all fours, her eyes hungry. "Fuck, Tessa, share him already," she purred, nudging Tessa aside just enough to lick along the side of my shaft. Tessa pulled back with a pop, smirking up at me as Jasmine's lips wrapped around me, sucking greedily while Tessa's hand cupped my balls, rolling them gently.

Kim and Nala exchanged a glance, then stood, shedding their clothes as they approached. Kim's top came off first, revealing her breasts with hard nipples begging for attention. Nala followed, her skirt pooling at her feet, leaving her in just panties that she hooked her thumbs into and slid down slowly.

"You heard her, Evan," Nala said, her voice husky. "Fuck us. We've been waiting all damn day."

Chapter 180: Chapter 180

Tessa stood and Jasmine stood, Jasmine's hand still stroking me.

"On the couch," I growled, steering them toward the larger sectional. We tumbled onto it in a tangle of limbs, clothes flying off—my shirt ripped open, pants kicked away, the girls stripping down to nothing.

After lying down, Tessa straddled me first, grinding her wet pussy against my cock, coating me in her arousal. "Feel that? That's how much I've wanted this," she moaned, reaching down to guide me inside her. She sank down slowly, inch by inch, her tight heat enveloping me until I was buried to the hilt. "Oh fuck, yes... magic boy, stretch me out."

I thrust up into Tessa, hands clamped on her hips, bouncing her hard as she rode me like she was trying to break the couch. "Fuck, Evan, stretch me wide," she gasped, grinding down to take every inch. I slammed upward, meeting her halfway, the wet slap of skin echoing. "That's it, big boy, wreck my pussy." Her breasts bounced with every impact, nipples hard as diamonds. I leaned forward, catching one in my mouth, sucking hard while she moaned louder. "Yes... bite it, mark me."

Kim sprawled on my left, legs spread wide, fingers buried knuckle-deep in her own cunt, eyes glued to where Tessa and I joined. "God, look at you two... I'm dripping just

watching." She pumped faster, her free hand pinching her own nipple, twisting it until she whimmed. "I need that cock next, Evan. I'm aching."

Nala climbed onto the arm of the couch, knees on either side of my head, lowering her soaked pussy onto my mouth. "Eat me, Evan. Tongue-fuck me till I scream." I dove in, lapping at her clit, sucking her folds, her juices coating my chin as she rocked against my face. "Yes, right there... swirl it." Her thighs trembled, hands braced on the back of the couch for leverage.

'Man, she learns fast, huh?'

Jasmine knelt on my right, hand stroking my thigh, nails scraping lightly. "Save some for me, Tessa. I want that cock next." She leaned in, licking a stripe up Tessa's spine, making Tessa shudder. "Feel how wet she is, Evan? That's all for you."

Tessa's rhythm turned frantic, her breaths ragged. "Shit, I'm close... harder, Evan!" I pistoned into her, feeling her walls flutter and grip. She threw her head back, a loud cry ripping from her throat as she came, pussy clamping down, gushing over my shaft. She kept riding, drawing it out, body shaking. "Don't stop... milk me dry..."

"Switch," Kim panted, yanking Tessa off with a wet pop. Tessa flopped beside me, chest heaving, fingers lazily circling her clit to prolong the aftershocks. Kim spun around into reverse cowgirl, teasing the head along her slit before sinking down slow, inch by inch. "Fuck, you're splitting me open." Her ass bounced as she bottomed out, hands on my knees. I reached around, pinching her nipples hard, twisting until she squealed. "Yes, hurt me a little... I love it."

I spanked her ass, leaving red handprints. "Ride me, Kim. Show me how bad you need it."

She slammed back, moaning louder with every bounce, her pussy fluttering around me. "I'm gonna cum so fast... you feel too good."

Thank you, Pleasure.

Jasmine leaned in, whispering filthy in my ear. "When you're done with her, bend me over and rail me till I can't walk." Her hand slipped between Kim's cheeks, pressing a finger against Kim's tight hole, making her gasp. "You like that, Kim? Double stuffed?"

Nala kept grinding on my tongue, thighs trembling. "Suck my clit... yes, Evan, just like that!" Her hips jerked, and she came hard, flooding my mouth as she cried out, body convulsing. I swallowed every drop, tongue still flicking to keep her trembling.

I kissed Nala's ass, got off from the couch and flipped Kim onto all fours on the floor, gripping her hips and driving in from behind. "Take it deep, Kim." She pushed back greedily, ass jiggling with every thrust.

"Harder... fuck me like you own me!" I pounded relentlessly, balls slapping her clit. She came again, screaming, pussy squirting down my shaft as her arms gave out, face pressed to the carpet. Fuck, this skill was so good.

I pulled out, cock slick and throbbing, and hauled Jasmine up against the window. City lights glittered behind her as I lifted one leg, sliding home in a single thrust. "Look at that view," I growled, "you, the city... perfect."

She wrapped her arms around my neck, nails digging in. "Fuck me against the glass, Evan. Let the whole damn city hear me scream."

I pinned her there, one hand gripping her thigh to keep her leg hooked high, the other braced against the cool window. The skyline glittered behind her, neon bleeding into her sweat-slick skin as I drove upward, slow at first, letting her feel every inch stretch her open.

"Fuuuck, you're so deep," she hissed, forehead pressed to the glass. "I can feel the whole city watching you ruin me." I picked up speed, hips snapping, the wet slap of my balls against her echoing off the pane. Her tits bounced with every thrust, nipples grazing the cold surface, making her gasp. "Harder... make the fucking window shake."

I growled, angling to hit that spot inside her that made her eyes roll back. "You like being on display, Jas? Every light out there knows you're getting fucked senseless."

She moaned louder, pussy clenching. "Yes... fuck, yes. Pound me till I can't stand."

I lowered her leg slowly, letting it slide down my hip until her foot touched the floor. My hands slid to her waist, spinning her around in one smooth motion. She caught herself with both palms flat against the glass, ass arching back toward me instinctively. "Yes... take me like this, baby, just like that, just like that... yes," she panted, spreading her legs wider, presenting herself. The city lights painted stripes across her back, her reflection in the window showing her flushed face and parted lips.

I gripped her hips, lined up, and slammed back in from behind, burying myself to the hilt in one brutal thrust. "Fuck, your ass looks perfect like this," I groaned, watching it jiggle with every impact. She pushed back to meet me, the glass creaking under her hands. "Deeper... own me, Evan. Make me your little window slut."

Tessa chuckled, watching us while sitting on the couch, playing with her cunt. "Window slut. I like that."

Her breath fogged the glass in frantic bursts. I reached between us, thumb circling her clit in tight, rough strokes. "Oh, god. Fuck... Evan, I'm... I'm gonna... ah, fuck, fuck..."

"Cum on my cock, baby. Let them hear it."

She shattered, walls spasming, juices dripping down my shaft and thighs. "Evan! OH FUCK!" Her legs shook, body trembling as she rode the wave, nails scraping the glass.

The heat was unbearable. I needed them all at once. "On your knees, asses up," I commanded, voice rough. They scrambled into position on the plush rug—four perfect backs arched, pussies glistening, lined up like an offering. Tessa on the left, then Kim, Jasmine, Nala on the right.

I knelt behind Tessa first, sliding into her cum-slick heat with a groan. "Still full of me, huh?" I gave her ten, maybe more hard thrusts, hips slapping, before pulling out and moving to Kim.

She whimpered as I filled her, "Yes, use me..." Another ten strokes, deeper, faster. Jasmine next—her pussy gripped like a vice.

"Fuck, Evan, don't tease..."

"Oh, yeah. Hmm... so good." I railed her, balls slapping her clit, then switched to Nala.

"Save the best for last," she moaned, pushing back.

I rotated through them, a few seconds each, their moans blending into a filthy chorus. Tessa begged, "Come back... I need more..." Kim whined, "Don't stop..." Jasmine cursed, "Harder, damn it..." Nala gasped, "Breed me..."

My. Fucking. God.

The pressure coiled tight. I plunged back into Tessa, gripping her hips. "Gonna fill you again." She shoved back. "Do it... flood me!" I roared, unloading deep, ropes of cum painting her walls as she came with me, pussy milking every drop. I stayed buried, grinding through the aftershocks, then pulled out slow, cum dripping down her thighs.

"Sit," Tessa panted, pushing me onto the couch. I collapsed, cock still hard and glistening. Nala straddled me immediately, facing me, sinking down with a moan. "My turn to be bred." She rode slow at first, grinding, then faster, breasts bouncing in my face. I sucked a nipple, biting gently.

Kim and Tessa flanked me on the couch. Kim leaned in, licking Nala's neck, whispering, "Ride him good, make him cum inside you."

Tessa played with my nipples, pinching and twisting. "Feel how hard he is for you, Nala?"

Kim then slid down, wedging herself between my legs under Nala's bouncing ass. She cupped my balls, licking them clean of Tessa's cream, sucking one into her mouth. "These are mine," she mumbled around the sack, rolling it with her tongue, then the

other. She licked the base of my shaft where it disappeared into Nala, tasting us both. "So fucking dirty...."

Nala's pace turned frantic. "I'm close... Evan, don't stop..."

"Look at her," Jasmine said, standing behind Nala as she looked at her. "No one would've guessed she was a virgin, huh?"

I gripped Nala's ass, thrusting up to meet her. "Take it... all of it."

She screamed, walls clamping down as she came, and I followed, erupting deep inside her, flooding her until it leaked around my cock. She kept riding, drawing it out, both of us shaking.

I panted, cock still twitching inside her. "Come on, girls... clean my cock."